

THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival
of Religion in Great Britain, America, &c.

Saturday JUNE 23. 1744. § N^o. 69.

*Account of the Revival of Religion at LYME West Parish
in Connecticut, continued.*

WHOEVER will read the Accounts of *Conviction* recorded, *Acts* 2. 37, 41. &c. *Chap.* 16. 30. *Chap.* 9. 4. *Rev.* 1. 17. and other Places, must allow that Persons may be under all these bodily Seizures when the Spirit is convincing of Sin, or reject the Letter of the Word. And so if we read, *Psal.* 55. 32. 63.--42. *Cant.* 2. and many other Portions of Scripture, we must conclude that Persons may cry out, faint, and have other bodily Distress flowing from thirsting for God or rejoicing in him.----But I had forgot that I was only to hint at Things here.

And,

3. Much less is it *reasonable* for any to argue that Men are *not* under either the *convincing* or *sanctifying* Influences of the HOLY SPIRIT because they have *none* of these bodily Agitations. GOD by his SPIRIT gives greater Encouragements and Supports to some Men under Convictions than he does to others: all have some Gleam of Hope that it is possible they may be converted; but some have great Refreshings and a great Sense of the Glories of Heaven; and hence they are not so much born down as others: Some have fainter Views of the Grace of the Gospel, and are less sensible of a Work of Grace wro't in their Souls than others, and are proportionably less likely to be overcome or thrown into bodily Agitations, tho' the Discovery be effectual, and the Grace special. Some have a *Work* of the Law and the Gospel carried on more gradually than others, and therefore, tho'

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they have a thoro' Work, their Bodies are not so sensibly and suddenly affected. Others are not so easily affected and made to tremble, faint, shriek, groan or the like, under the same Views of Sin and the Wrath of GOD; or the same Views of a GOD reconciled in JESUS CHRIST, that wou'd throw their Neighbours into violent Agitations of Body or into a fainting Fit. Various are the Degrees of Light; various also the Length of Time the SPIRIT takes to let in that Light, and to give those Influences which are necessary to prepare and bring a Soul to CHRIST: various are the Dispositions and Constitutions of Men; various are the Encouragements Discouragements and Impediments they meet with. And hence they may be variously affected, tho' each one or all are bro't to the same happy Issue, respecting a *Law* and *Gospel-Work* upon their Souls.

X 4. I think it is not reasonable to suspect Persons are not under divine Influence, or *have not had a saving Change*, merely because we look upon them to be *imprudent* or *irregular* in some Respects. Men are too apt to magnify every real or supposed wry Step, and at once call it Disorder, and represent it as wholly inconsistent with the Being, or at least the Exercise of Grace. Thus a glorious Work or an excellent Christian may be trod upon, and many real Excellencies over-look'd, merely because of some real or fancied Imprudencies and Irregularities: Yea, and in this Way the innocent may be involved with the Guilty, and a great Multitude may suffer Reproach for some imprudent Measures of a single Person: or a whole Profession may be insulted because a few particular Men are detected in an unwarrantable Practice. If we take such Measures as any of these on either Side, I can't see where any Bounds can be left to *practical* Censoriousness.---Is it to be supposed that all the Subjects of GOD's special Grace must at once become *wise Philosophers*, or *judicious Divines*?---If it were so, yet don't the wisest and best of Men differ in Opinion and Practice in some circumstantial Things, and those that are of lesser Moment? And is the *Kingdom of GOD Meat and Drink*?---Nay, are they free, entirely free from all Blame?---But if they, the best of them miss it in some Things, and precipitate into real Faults; why shou'd others of far less Advantage and Opportunity, be censured as *Enthusiasts*, being lead abo ut by *diabolical*

Real Delusions, and what not, meerly because there are some Things in their Conduct which we don't so well like? Indeed, if the Course of a Man's Life was plainly *immoral*, their wou'd be something to be said; enough to shut my Mouth from speaking favourably of his State.---But if that is the Case, who are the Persons?---And if that is not the Plea, why should every imprudent Act be deem'd a sufficient Argument against the Influences of the SPIRIT of GOD? Did our blessed SAVIOUR tell his Apostles that they had not sanctifying Discoveries of GOD in CHRIST, when they were lead into a great Mistake of Judgment, and were fired with false Zeal?---How common is it; nay when is it otherwise, but *human Mistakes & false Fire* mix themselves in with our best Services? Shou'd we wait for the Time when no Disorder, no Irregularity, no false Step is to be found in such as may be called the Subjects of GOD's special Grace, we must never expect to see the Day upon Earth, when we shall be brought to confess that verily God is in the midst of us, working in us, and in others, that which is well-pleasing in his Sight. “ If Allowances are to be made doubtless *young Converts* claim our Charity in the *first Place*, especially when their Distress has been great, and their Joy proportional: Like Men coming into a new Country, or rather a *new World*, they are not yet acquainted with all the *Fashions* and *Decencies* of it;---it is no Wonder *every Punctillia* is not observ'd, which *after Experience*, and *cooler Reflection* will dictate. Shall we pardon the *learned*, the *composed* ARCHIMIDES, tho' going beyond *all the Bounds of Decency*, when transported with a Mathematical Discovery, and finding out only certain Proportions in Figures, an *abstract Truth* not *immediately* calculated to attract the Affections, and confined to this World in its Consequences? ---And shall we make no Allowance for illiterate Country Men, and others of small Experience, when *ravished* with the Discoveries of *another World*, and the Knowledge of GOD and CHRIST, *whom to know is Life eternal*? This were to treat them not with *common Humanity*: But they must expect no Quarter.”

5. If Persons, in great Numbers, are, in their general Course, turned from a careless vain and carnal to a careful and religious Conversation; from an immoral and loose, to a moral and strict Life; if they discover by all reasonable Evidence that they have a deep Sense of Sin and the Wrath of GOD, or afterwards, the Consolations of GOD; if they are apparently changed from worldly Pursuits to Things of everlasting Importance; if from resting in Self-righteousness and Blamelessness they are made sensible of the Necessity of Faith and Holiness, and can't rest until they have what appears to us a good Evidence of resting in CHRIST; if they are turned from an apparent Irreverence and wandering in the House of GOD, and other Places of divine Worship, to an apparent devout and reverend Attendance on the Institutions of the LORD; if from spending Sabbaths in Idleness, or much of their Time in worldly Conversation, or Disputes, which gender Strife, they are turn'd to spend Sabbaths in publick and private Exercises of Worship with evident Care and Devotion, and in Christian Conferences about the Things of God; if there is, added to these Things, a manifest Reformation in relative Duties, and Persons apparently grow in Christian Knowledge at an unusual Rate, and really appear to have frequent and sensible Communion with CHRIST, if it makes Men better Husbands, Women better Wives, Fathers and Mothers better Parents, Children more careful in their Stations, People more prayerful for and loving to their Ministers (such as they think properly their Ministers:) If this in general is true of any People, all in a few Weeks or Months; I think we must conclude that such are under divine Influence, and GOD has graciously *pour'd out his SPIRIT upon them*, even tho' they precipitate into many imprudent Measures, or thro' wrong Judgment, they differ from us in many Things that are not fundamental. What if they cry out, faint, speak aloud in a public Assembly at an improper Time, happen to think they should tell their Neighbours their Fears that they are Strangers to CHRIST; what if they think themselves called to stay as long from their Families in the Night to pray to and praise GOD, as they have heretofore tarried to revel and drink, and to make themselves merry with vain Companions; what if in these and some other Things they believe differently from others; and in some other Things they have,

have, for want of due Consideration, run into some Indecencies, but upon serious Reflection see the Mistake and reform ; I can't think these Things any good Argument against their being under the Influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, either convincing or sanctifying.

But I have exceeded my Design in hinting at Preliminaries, tho' I hope, you will forgive me, and carry these Things in your Mind, while you read on in the subsequent Part of my Account.

The *Effects* of that Sermon I spake of, preached on the 29th of *March* were then surprizing. Indeed there were no Out-Cries ; but a deep and general Concern upon the Minds of the Assembly discovered itself at that Time in plentiful Weeping, Sighs and Sobs. And what appear'd hopeful then, I found, upon conversing with many afterwards, to be true, as far as I could judge. Many told me that they never had such an awaken'd Sense of the Danger of putting off the grand Concern of their Souls to a future Season before, as God gave them under that Sermon : They were surprized at their own past Carelessness, and astonished that God had born with them so long. Several told me, that tho' they had liv'd *thirty* *forty* or *fifty* Years under the Preaching of the Gospel, they had never felt the Power of the Word upon their Hearts, so as to be long affected thereby, at any Time as they did then. Before it was the Cry of their Hearts, ' *When will the Sermon be over, and the Sabbath be ended* ' ; but now the Minister always left off too soon, and the Time between Sermons was too long : they long for frequently returning Opportunities to hear. Before, they did not love Soul-searching Discourses, but now never cou'd hear too much of that Nature, together with many other Things of the like Import.

On the *Beginning* of the following Month, Mr. Tennent came thro' this Place, and preached *two* Sermons among us : The first was in the *Evening*, from *Ezek. 37. 9*. But he seem'd to be very dull ; and, I tho't, several Times, he wou'd have had nothing, almost to say. Yet he got thro', and, I believe, he preached the Truth, tho' with no Freedom ; nor had the People in general much Sense of what was deliver'd according to the best Observation I cou'd make ; yet it was not wholly in vain : one of our Communion was convinc'd of Sin, which after some Days, issu'd, I trust in a saving Conversion to God. --- The next Morning he

he preached again from *Luk. 13. 24.* to a very attentive and deeply affected Auditory. Many that I heard lamenting their own Folly immediately after Sermon, spake as one wou'd expect those to do that had the Arrows of Conviction shot deep into their Hearts. I was not indeed, so sensible of the *extensive* Effects of that Sermon in the Time of it (tho' there was so much visible Concern under it) as afterwards. In a little while a considerable Number came to me and confess'd that they saw themselves undone, that earnestly enquired what they must do to be saved, who dated their first Awakenings from that Sermon.--- From us Mr. *Tennent* went over to *Saybrook*, and many of the People of this Place, and the neighbouring Societies went with me to hear him. There he preach'd a rational, searching Sermon, suited to unconverted Sinners and drowsy Saints. I saw but few Instances of Persons much moved by it to Appearance, in Sermon Time; but found some very much enraged with the Preacher afterwards. Some that went from this Town, spent their Time upon the Way home in caviling, and finding Fault with what had been delivered, and I believe did much Hurt thereby. One especially, who shall be nameless, seem'd exceedingly disaffected, and endeavour'd to disaffect others. But still he could not forget the Sermon, especially that Part of it which was to backward Christians; and tho' he tho't, or endeavour'd to think, that it was a censorious Discourse, yet, as he told me afterwards, it never left him until he was made to see that he was the very Man to whose Case it was suited above any Sermon that ever he had heard.

After this I observed that our Assemblies were greater and more attentive at Times of publick Worship than before. Sabbaths alone wou'd not suffice for hearing Sermons, but greater Numbers still urg'd for frequent Lectures. I was well pleas'd to observe such a flocking to the Windows, and a hearing Ear become general; and therefore I readily consented, upon the Request of the People, to preach as often as I cou'd, besides the stated Exercises of the Sabbath. Once every Week I carried on a publick Lecture, besides several private ones in various Parts of the Parish. And I could not but observe about this Time, that an Evening Lecture I had set up the Winter before in a private House, for the sake of a young Man that was a Cripple, tho' at
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first exceeding thin (but seven Persons, as I remember, besides the Family) was now greatly increas'd, and in about a Month grew up to several Hundreds, so that I was oblig'd to turn it into a publick Evening Lecture.

Now it pleas'd God to encourage my Heart, give me unusual Freedom, and such a firm State of bodily Health, that I could go thro' three Times the Service I had been able to endure at other Times ; so that I was able to study and write three Sermons a Week, and preach several others of my old Notes (for I seldom in all the Time preach'd without Writing.) Sometime in this Month Mr. *Grifwold* invited me to preach a Lecture for him, and I consented. While I was preaching from *Psal.* 119. 59, 60. I observ'd many of the Assembly in Tears, and heard many crying out in very great Bitterness of Soul, as it seem'd then by the Sound of Voices. When Sermon was over I cou'd better take Notice of the Cause ; and the Language was to this Purpose, *viz.* Alas ! I'm undone ; I'm undone ! O my Sins ! How they prey upon my Vitals ! What will become of me ? How shall I escape the Damnation of Hell, who have spent away a golden Opportunity under Gospel Light, in Vanity ? --- And much more of the like Import. --- 'Tis true, Outcries were *new* and surprizing at that Time : but knowing the Terrors of the Lord, I was satisfy'd that they were but what might be reasonably accounted for ; if Sinners were under a true Sense of their Sins, and the Wrath of a Sin-hating God : And therefore I did not use any Endeavours to restrain them at that Time ; but the greater Number cried out of themselves and their Vileness, the more I rejoiced in Hope of the good Issue. As I was satisfied that it was the Truth they had been hearing, so, by their Complaints, it appeared to be the Force of Truth that made them cry out, and threw many of them into Hysterick-Fits : And, if I mistake not, every one that were so violently seiz'd that Night, have since given good Evidence of their Conversion ; but that, their Reverend Pastor can give the best Account of.

The visible Success of my Ministry in that and some other Lectures abroad, (tho' I rejoyc'd in the happy Prospect of the Advancement of the Kingdom of our divine Lord) was far from being a Means to damp my Hopes or slacken my Endeavours at Home. My Heart burned with Love to

and Pity for the People of my peculiar Charge : I had constant Supplies of Argument flowing into my Mind, and Zeal to urge a speedy Answer.

By the latter End of *April* our young People were generally sick of that vain Mirth, and those foolish Amusements that had been their Delight, and were form'd into several religious Societies for Prayer and reading Books of Piety under my Direction : Many of them were frequently in my Study for Advice ; the Bent of their Souls was evidently towards the Things of another World : Whenever they fell into Companies, the great Salvation was the Subject of their Conversation. They were so generally displeas'd with themselves for past Carelessness, and spending Time in Revels and Frolicks, that several, at the Desire of others, came to me, and desir'd me to preach them a Lecture upon the 14th of *May* (the Day of our Election in this Colony) which they had, for many Years, accustomed themselves to spend in Feasting, Musick, Dancing, Gaming, and the like. I complied with the Request, and preach'd to a great Assembly, from *Mat. 24. 37, 38, 39.* Upon which I observ'd, that *Jesus Christ would certainly come to judge the World* ; and that *when he did come, he would find it overwhelm'd in carnal Security* ; and from these Considerations I applied my self to those that had been secure and unwatchful, both among Christians and unconverted Sinners, in a Manner, which, I tho't, proper to awaken and convince. Under this Sermon many had their *Countenances changed* ; their *Tho'ts* seemed to trouble them, *so that the Joyns of their Loyns were loos'd, and their Knees smote one against another.* Great Numbers cried out aloud in the Anguish of their Souls : several stout Men fell as tho' a Cannon had been discharg'd, and a Ball had made its Way thro' their Hearts. Some young Women were thrown into Hysterick Fits. The Sight and Noise of Lamentation, seem'd a little Resemblance of what we may imagine will be when the great Judge pronounces the tremendous Sentence of, *Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire.* There were so many in Distress that I could not get a particular Knowledge of the special Reasons at that Time, only as I heard them crying, *Wo is me ! What must I do ?* And such sort of short Sentences with bitter Accents.-----

(To be continued.)